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WE CLAIM:

A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic lock for said safe;

coupling a control unit external to said electronic lock;

receiving signals at said electronic lock from said control unit; and

controlling said safe in response to said signals.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of sending an unlock signal to said electronic lock from said control unit.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of sending an unlock signal comprises sending an unlock signal after receiving a user ID and a PIN.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of encrypting said PIN.

5. The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of saving at least a portion of said signals in an audit database.

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6. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of receiving signals at said electronic  
lock comprises receiving said signals from a remotely located computer.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of sending signals from said  
electronic lock to said control unit.

8. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:  
receiving login information at a control unit external to said safe;  
enabling a user to select an open door option; and  
providing signals from said control unit to said electronic lock in response to the  
selection of said open door option.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of saving said login information  
in a database.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open  
door option comprises displaying an open door option on said control unit.

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11. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open  
2 door option comprises providing a predetermined location on said control unit for  
accessing said electronic lock.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein said step of providing a predetermined location  
2 comprises providing a secret location on a computer screen.

13. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open  
door option comprises enabling entry of an override response key.

14. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of receiving login information on said  
control unit comprises receiving a user ID and a PIN.

15. The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of encrypting at least a portion  
2 of said login information.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising a step of saving said portion of said  
2 login information in a database.

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17. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:
- 2 receiving a user ID and a PIN at a control unit external to said safe;
- enabling a user to select an open door option displayed on said control unit;
- 4 encrypting said PIN;
- saving said user ID and an encrypted PIN in a database; and
- 6 providing an unlock signal from said control unit to said electronic lock in
- response to the selection of said open door option if said user ID and PIN are valid.
18. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:
- providing an electronic lock for said safe;
- coupling a control unit externally to an electronic lock;
- providing signals from said control unit to said safe;
- coupling said signals to said electronic lock; and
- 6 unlocking said safe in response to said signals.
19. The method of claim 18 further including a step of receiving login information
- 2 at said control unit.

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20. The method of claim 19 wherein said step of receiving login information on said  
2 control unit comprises receiving a user ID and a PIN.

21. The method of claim 19 further comprising a step of saving said login  
2 information in a database.

22. The method of claim 18 further including a step of displaying an open door  
option on said control unit.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein said step of displaying a open door option  
comprises displaying a secret location on a computer display for accessing said  
electronic lock.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising a step of receiving login information  
2 after said secret location is accessed on said computer display.

25. The method of claim 18 wherein said step of providing signals comprises  
2 providing an unlock signal to said safe from a remote computer.

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26. The method of claim 18 further comprising a step of providing a status of said electronic lock to said control unit.

27. An apparatus for controlling a safe, said apparatus comprising:

an electronic lock incorporated in said safe;

an input/output port coupled to said electronic lock;

a control unit coupled to said input/output port; and

a control signal received at said input/output port from said control unit.

28. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein said control unit comprises a computer.

29. The apparatus of claim 28 wherein said computer comprises a remote computer coupled to said input/output port by way of a communication network.

30. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said remote computer further comprises a communication circuit.

31. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said remote computer further comprises a memory.

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32. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein said memory comprises a database having  
2 encrypted PIN information.

33. The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said electronic lock further comprises a  
2 communication circuit.

34. A system for controlling a safe, said apparatus comprising:  
an electronic lock means for controlling said safe;  
an input/output means coupled to said electronic lock means for receiving  
signals;  
a control unit means coupled to said input/output means for providing signals to  
said electronic lock;  
a signal received at said input/output means from said control unit means for  
8 controlling said safe; and  
a memory coupled to said control unit for storing information received by said  
10 control unit in an audit trail database.